

To CT Legislators - Testimony

My name is Antonio Camacho. Im the second oldest of 4 siblings in my family. I experience BiPolar Disorder. I have learned that people with mental health issues can have a voice. We have value and experience recovery but only with regular maintenance. Currently, Im finishing a GED degree and excited about my future. Adults with mental illness are a part of the community which should always be protected and included in your considerations of helpful policies supporting services which keep adults healthy. Without your protections of supportive bills and budgets for services...it sets off a negative domino effect across the state.

I myself have had several suicide attempts and today my life has meaning because of the services which have been available to me. I have learned how low mental health can drop due to low self-esteem and lack of opportunities to stabilize health. My life improved when I learned to love myself and accept others into it. My life today is happy and stable, healthier. I am proud of the many legislators which do struggle to keep Medicare & Medicaid entitlements, ObamaCare and Husky insurances available to those in need. Without these insurances, without access to important care, Im sure Id be 6 feet underground today (dead).

Stigmas will always be put upon those who don't fit the mold but people can practice, improve and experience healthier lifestyles. People are inclusive and attracted to the healthy, not so much to unhealthy. I have found with much work and determination, better able to heal with guidance & support through nurturing mental healthcare workers. I feel really care about my recovery and have a stake in my future. My peace of mind allows me to continue to think about what next steps lie ahead. When your mind is full of upset and fear, it is hard to move forward.

CT mental health service budget cuts would not only set back my progress, I know for a fact it would stop peers just beginning their journeys. It would cost CT's DMHAS a lot more money to repair the damage done by eliminating or seriously reducing services than to find creative ways to shore up currently existing ones burdened by growth. Why not recruit a subcommittee of adults in recovery to brainstorm ways to help save CT's DMHAS Dept?! I think of the Recovery Peer Specialists who are being used to save on traditional Case Management salaries.

My mental health is kept in check thanks to the professional services I can access. I feel together with the help of CT legislators, we will prosper. I am hopeful. Please advocate for budgets which preserve services and do not hurt the vulnerable. It is possible to make and create the change which allows us all to move forward!

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